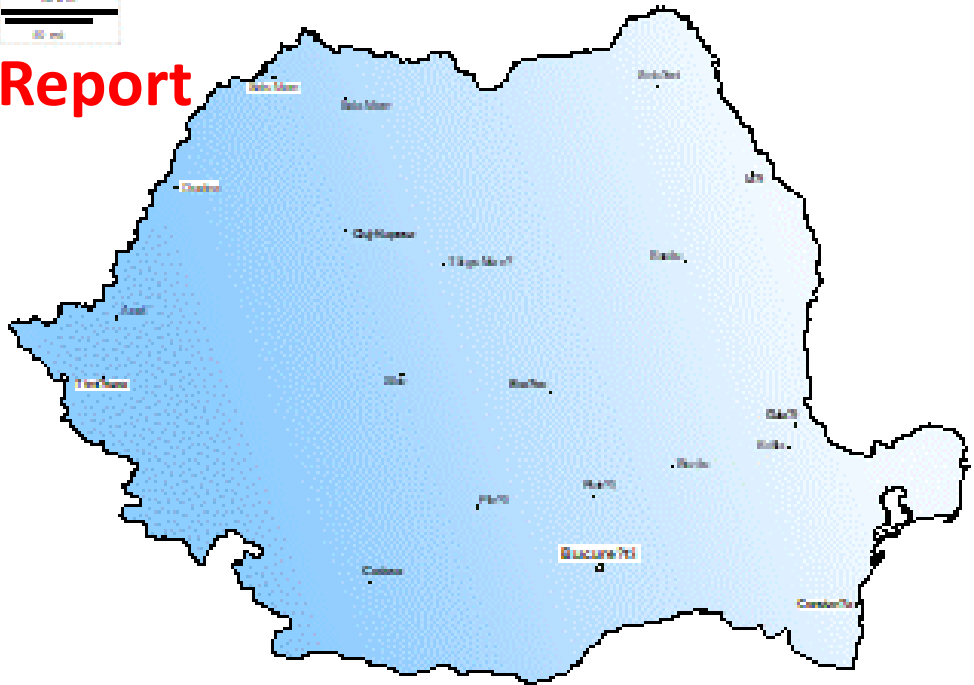
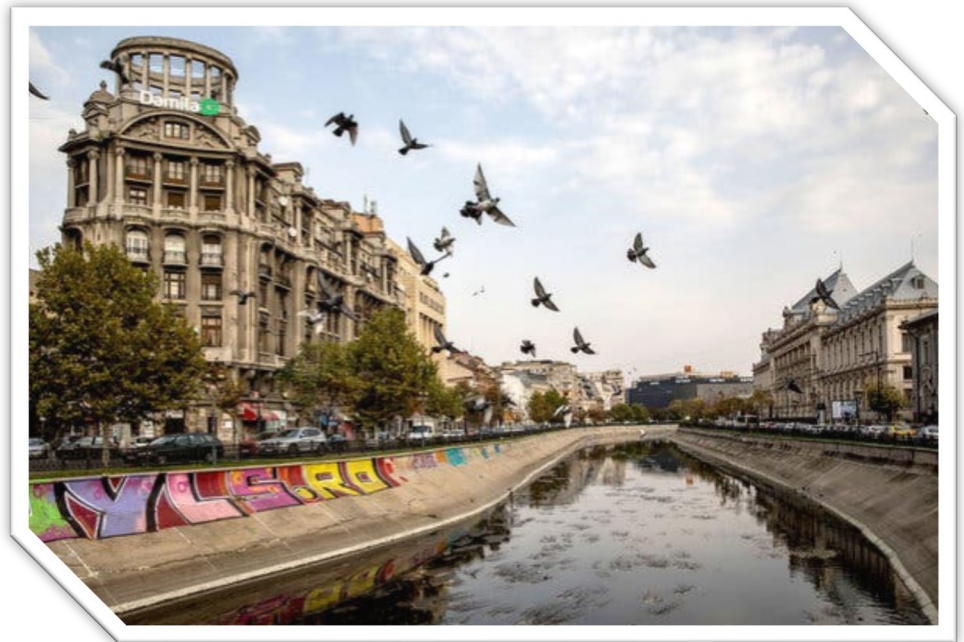


# NCSEJ Country Report



## Romania



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# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Since the 1989 Revolution, Romania has been improving its democratic institutions and capitalist market economy; however, issues such as corruption and government instability continue to be a major obstacle to the country’s development. <i>Read more.</i>	
<b>History</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Over the centuries, the territory of Romania had been invaded and dominated by the Roman and Ottoman Empires and the Soviet Union. The Ottoman rule lasted from the 17 <sup>th</sup> to the late 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Romania declared its independence in 1881 and became a kingdom with Carol I as its king. <i>Read more.</i>	
<b>Domestic Affairs</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Romania is a semi-presidential representative democracy with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The Prime Minister of Romania is the head of the government, and the President is the head of the state. <i>Read more.</i>	
<b>Economic Situation</b> .....	<b>6</b>
The global economic crisis severely affected Romania commercially, financially, and in terms of foreign direct investments. <i>Read more.</i>	
<b>Foreign Policy</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Romania has varied relations with its neighbors. The country has experienced complicated relations with Moldova and Ukraine on the matters of territory ownership and borders. <i>Read more.</i>	
<u>Relations with the United States</u> .....	<b>8</b>
Areas of bilateral focus include NATO capabilities and multinational operations, counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, missile defense, human rights, economic growth, energy security, and regional cooperation. <i>Read more.</i>	
<u>Relations with Israel</u> .....	<b>10</b>
Romania and Israel share a long history of strong friendship and a tradition of cooperation. Romania recognized the state of Israel and established diplomatic relations in June 1948. <i>Read more.</i>	
<b>Jewish Community</b> .....	<b>11</b>
The first large wave of Jewish immigrants arrived in Walachia (a Romanian principality) in the 14 <sup>th</sup> century, after they had been expelled from Hungary in 1367. In the 16 <sup>th</sup> century, some refugees from the Spanish expulsion came to Wallachia. They served as physicians and even diplomats at the court of sovereigns of Wallachia. <i>Read more.</i>	
<b>Anti-Semitism</b> .....	<b>12</b>
There is no state discrimination against the Jewish community in Romania. Romanian legislation combating antisemitism bans fascist, racist, and xenophobic organizations and punishes Holocaust denial. <i>Read more.</i>	

## Executive Summary

Since the 1989 Revolution, Romania has been improving its democratic institutions and capitalist market economy; however, issues such as corruption and government instability continue to be a major obstacle to the country's development.

Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007. As a member of NATO and the EU, the country's foreign policy priorities include further integration with the European and Euro-Atlantic communities and maintaining its strategic partnership with the United States.

Romania is a small country located in Central Europe, Romania borders Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Moldova, and the Black Sea.

The country has experienced strained and complicated relations with Moldova and Ukraine; however, its close ties with Hungary greatly helped the country join the EU.

### Statistics:

**Population:** 19.29 million (July 2020 est.)

**Size:** 238, 390 sq. km

**Capital:** Bucharest

**Major cities:** Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, Iasi, and Constanta

**Jewish population:** 10,000-14,000

**Head of State:** President Klaus Iohannis

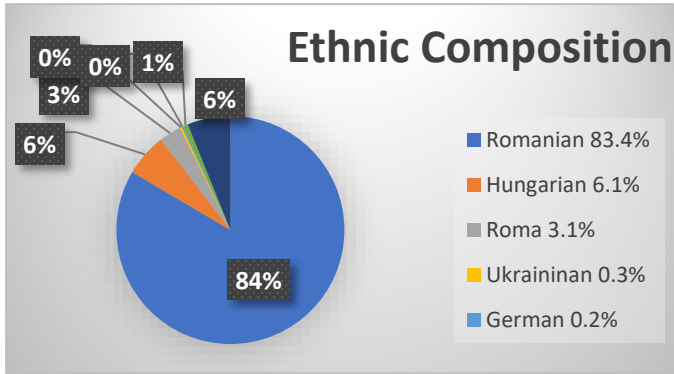
**Head of Government:** Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă

**Foreign Minister:** Bogdan Aurescu

**Ambassador to the United States:** Andrei Muraru

**U.S. Ambassador to Romania:** Kathleen Kavalec

**Freedom House Rating:** Free



In 2014, Romania declared its support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity during the Crimean crisis and expressed its hope to see Ukraine become an EU member state.

Historically, one of Romania’s main foreign policy goals has been to form good relations with an external power to reduce its vulnerability and has thus been pushing strengthening bilateral relations with the

US. During the Cold War, Romania was the only communist country not to break its diplomatic relations with Israel. The two countries continue cooperation in the areas of defense, technology, education, business, and tourism.

Romania’s Jewish community is estimated at 10,000-14,000 people and is mostly centered in Bucharest.



*Local Jews praying in Bucharest.*



*Fabric Synagogue in Timisoara, Romania.*

## History

Over the centuries, the territory of Romania had been invaded and dominated by the Roman and Ottoman Empires and the Soviet Union. The Ottoman rule lasted from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Romania declared its independence in 1881 and became a kingdom with Carol I as its king.

During the First World War, Romania fought along with Britain, France, and Russia against Austria-Hungary.

In the Second World War, under Marshal Ion Antonescu, Romania joined the Axis powers and helped invade the Soviet Union.

From 1967 up until the fall of the Soviet Union – and subsequent Romanian Revolution – in 1989, the country was ruled by Nicolae Ceaușescu, considered to be one of the most brutal dictators of the communist bloc. His secret police, the Securitate, was responsible for mass surveillance as well as severe repression and human rights abuses within the country and he suppressed and controlled the media and press, implementing methods that were among the harshest, most restrictive, and brutal in the world. Economic mismanagement due to failed oil ventures during the 1970s led to skyrocketing foreign debts for Romania. In 1982, he exported much of the country's agricultural and industrial production in an effort to repay them. The shortages that followed drastically lowered living standards, leading to heavy rationing of food, water, oil, heat, electricity, medicine and other necessities. His cult of personality experienced unprecedented elevation, followed by extensive nepotism and the intense deterioration of foreign relations, even with the Soviet Union.



*The Romanian Parliament*

## **Domestic Affairs**

Romania is a semi-presidential representative democracy with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The Prime Minister of Romania is the head of the government, and the President is the head of the state. Romania is the only post-Soviet bloc country where a party claiming to be the successor to the Communist party does not have a strong foothold in the nation's politics.

The national legislature consists of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies has 334 seats, and the Senate has 137 seats.

Since 2012, the Social Democratic Party has been the largest party in the Parliament and the biggest and most influential political force in the country. In the 2014 presidential elections, Klaus Iohannis surprisingly defeated his Social-Democrat opponent Prime Minister Victor Ponta who had been the favorite in the polls leading up to the election.



*The Romanian Coat of Arms*

On October 10, 2019, the Romanian government collapsed after Social Democrat

Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă narrowly lost a confidence vote in parliament. Dăncilă, who took office in January 2018, was ousted after 238 lawmakers voted in favor of the motion, just five more than needed. She is also her party's candidate for president in an election to be held on November 10.

On November 24, Romanian voters took to the polls and overwhelmingly re-elected President Klaus Iohannis who garnered more than 60 percent of the votes. Iohannis ran on a campaign of 'Returning to Normalcy'. The vote was preceded by massive protests in the country relating to the parliament attempting to pass legislation that would legalize graft below \$40,000. As his victory became clear Iohannis stated: "I promise to be a president for all Romanians," Mr. Iohannis, 60, said as the results came in. "The winner today is modern Romania, European Romania, the normal Romania."

Romania has the 17<sup>th</sup> largest market economy by nominal GDP in the European Union. Up until the late 2009 financial crisis, Romania was referred to as the "Tiger of the East" due to its high growth rates and rapid development.

## **Economic Situation**

The global economic crisis severely affected Romania commercially, financially, and in terms of foreign direct investments.



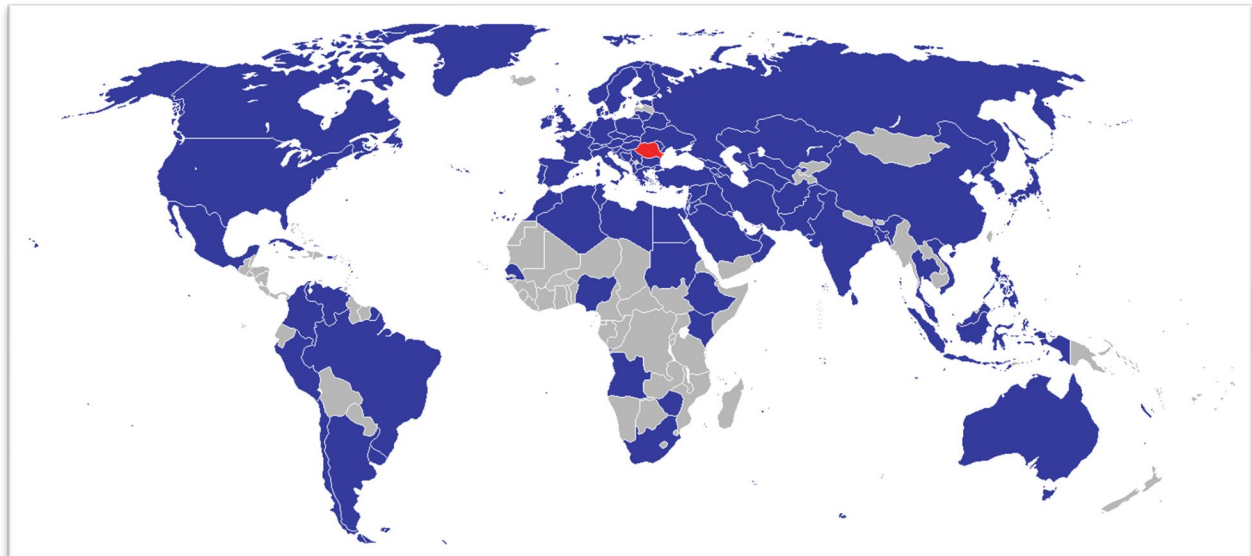
*Romanian President, Klaus Iohannis*

In March of 2010 Romania signed a deal for 20 billion Euro in loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the EU, the World Bank, and other international financial institutions.

Currency: 4.64 Romanian Leu = \$1  
GDP: \$284.1 billion (2021 est.)  
GDP per capita: \$14,858.23 (2021 est.)  
GDP Growth: 5.1% (2017 est.)

Romania has been successful in developing its industrial sector in recent years and has made its growth the principal stimulus to economic development. The development of agricultural sector in Romania has been less successful; however, it is projected to grow 12%.

## Foreign Policy



*Countries where Romania has Diplomatic Missions*

Romania has varied relations with its neighbors. The country has experienced complicated relations with Moldova and Ukraine on the matters of territory ownership and borders.

On the other hand, Romania's diplomatic relations with Hungary, Bulgaria, and Serbia continue to grow. Moreover, Hungary played a great role in supporting Romania's entrance in the EU in 2007. As a member of NATO and the EU, Romania is focused on further integration with Western institutions. The country has been involved in NATO's peacekeeping operations in Angola, Bosnia, Albania, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In April 2008 Romania hosted the NATO Summit in Bucharest, the largest summit in NATO's history.



*Bogdan Aurescu, Foreign Minister of Romania*

Romania's NATO membership and the historical territorial conflict over Bessarabia (now Moldova) remains the primary cause of strained relations between Romania and Russia.

Romania established diplomatic relations with the United States in 1880, following Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire. The two countries halted their diplomatic relations in 1941 when Romania declared war on the United States; however, reestablished them in 1947. Since the 1989 revolution in Romania, the two countries have deepened diplomatic relations and increased cooperation on shared goals including economic and political development.

### **Relations with the United States**



*Romanian Ambassador to the US Andrei Muraru*

Areas of bilateral focus include NATO capabilities and multinational operations, counterterrorism, nuclear proliferation, missile defense, human rights, economic growth, energy security, and regional cooperation.

Romania contributes soldiers to the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Since September 11, 2001, Romania has been fully supportive of the U.S. in the Global War on Terror and participated in the American-led "Coalition of the Willing" that supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

On September 13, 2011, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Teodor Baconschi and US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton signed the "Agreement between Romania and the United States of America on the Deployment of the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania."

In 2011, the two countries signed a ballistic missile defense agreement, allowing the deployment of U.S. personnel, equipment, and anti-missile interceptors to Romania.



In May 2012, President Traian Basescu attended the NATO Summit Meeting in Chicago, Illinois. President Basescu also met with President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden.

In May 2014, Vice President Biden paid a two-day visit to Romania. He met with President Basescu and Prime Minister Victor Ponta to discuss the Crimean crisis and Romania's involvement in NATO missions.

In October 2014, the U.S. Navy formally established Naval Support Facility-Deveselu, the first new Navy base since 1987.

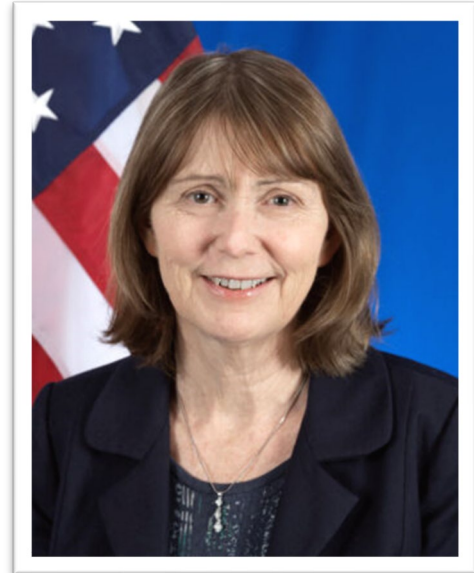
In September 2015, a NATO Force Integration Unit was activated in Bucharest. The country also hosts the Alliance's Multinational Division-Southeast headquarters in Bucharest and is committing significant resources to the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.

In May 2016, the U.S. launched a new ground-based missile defense system in Romania. The US says the Aegis system is a shield to protect NATO countries from short and medium-range missiles, particularly from the Middle East.

Romania is one of the most consistently pro-American nations in Europe and in the world. According to a 2018 European poll, 78% of Romanians view the United States favorably. This is the second highest pro-American sentiment in the European Union, after Poland. Another poll



*Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu meet in Washington D.C. (November 2021)*



*US Ambassador to Romania Kathleen Kavalec*

showed that a huge percentage of Romanians, 87%, want the future US Ambassador to Bucharest to continue to support the fight against corruption in Romania. The same poll showed that 74% of Romanians want the United States to remain the main strategic partner of Romania.

In November of 2021, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Foreign Minister of Romania Bogdan Aurescu discussed cooperation in the area of the Black Sea as well as security against 'Russian aggression,'

the US Department of State said in a statement. The Secretary praised Romania as a stalwart NATO Ally and both agreed to collaborate on Black Sea security issues and Russian aggression against Ukraine and others on NATO's Eastern Flank," according to the statement from the US Department of State.

Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Romanians have welcomed an expanded U.S. troop presence into their country. At the June 2022 NATO Summit, President Biden announced a rotational Brigade Combat Team that would be stationed in Romania. As NATO members, the Romanian government has given over 3 million dollars in aid.

## Relations with Israel

Romania and Israel share a long history of strong friendship and a tradition of cooperation. Romania recognized the state of Israel and established diplomatic relations in June 1948. Israel has an embassy in Bucharest. Romania has an embassy in Tel Aviv and three honorary consulates in the country.

Even though bilateral relations between Romania and Israel were affected by Israel's conflict with its Arab neighbors during the period 1948-1957, Romania was the only communist country during the Six Days War (June 1967) and the Cold War not to break diplomatic relations with Israel.

**Federația Comunităților  
Evreiești Din România  
(Federation of Jewish  
Communities in Romania)**

Website: [www.jewishfed.ro](http://www.jewishfed.ro)

President: Dr. Aurel Vainer  
Executive Director: Eduard  
Kupferberg

The two countries have agreed on a number of bilateral treaties including the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of National Education and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority of the State of Israel.

In March 2019, Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă announced at the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference that her government had decided to move its embassy to Jerusalem.



*Israeli Ambassador to Romania Ruvven Azar*

Hours after Romania's prime minister told the AIPAC conference on Sunday that her country will move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, the statement was strongly contradicted by the country's president, who opposes the move and has a final say on foreign policy issues. With the collapse of the Romanian government in October 2019 it is unknown if this policy will be implemented in the near future.

As of December 2021, the Romanian government has not clarified its policy on moving its Embassy to Jerusalem.

## Jewish Community

The first large wave of Jewish immigrants arrived in Walachia (a Romanian principality) in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after they had been expelled from Hungary in 1367.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, some refugees from the Spanish expulsion came to Wallachia. They served as physicians and even diplomats at the court of sovereigns of Wallachia.

Commercial competition instigated anti-Jewish sentiment in Romania. Anti-Semitism became particularly widespread in liberal and conservative parties in the 1920's. Only after the First World War was legislation enacted to emancipate Romanian Jewry.

Romania was not, however, immune to the anti-Semitism of 1930s Europe, and the rise in popularity of the fascist Legionnaire Movement and its paramilitary wing, the Iron Guard, was a result of its violently anti-Semitic policies. By the time the Iron Guard joined the government of military leader Ion Antonescu and formed its Legionary State in September 1940, much anti-Semitic legislation had already been passed, and the Legionnaires were allowed to persecute Jews with impunity. This persecution intensified, becoming violent in the three-day Bucharest Pogrom of January 21-23 during which the Legionnaires killed 125 Jews; women and children included. Thousands more were beaten and tortured, and two synagogues were destroyed.

In July 1941, as many as 13,000 Jews were killed in Iasi, in one of the worst pogroms in Jewish history. Mass killings and deportations followed, and, according to the Wiesel Commission report, released by the Romanian government in 2004, Romania in total killed 280,000 to 380,000 Jews during World War II. At the same time, 120,000 of Transylvania's 150,000 Jews died at the hands of Hungary's fascist government. While as many as 350,000 Romanian Jews survived the war, the Wiesel Commission states that "of all the allies of Nazi Germany, Romania was responsible for the deaths of more Jews than any country other than Germany itself."

Currently, Romania's Jewish community is numbering approximately 10,000-14,000 people, centered in Bucharest. 80% of the Jews in Romania are elderly; however, there is a concerted effort to maintain and expand Jewish life.

In the last 20 years, the Chabad in Bucharest opened a nursery, a day school, and a kosher store and restaurant. In addition, in 2023, Rabbi Aaron Teitelbaum inaugurated the New Grand Synagogue in Sighetu Marmatiei.

With the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, Chabad worked to evacuate Chabad's Alumim orphanage from Ukraine into Romania. The evacuees include 140 children.

## Anti-Semitism

There is no state discrimination against the Jewish community in Romania. Romanian legislation combating antisemitism bans fascist, racist, and xenophobic organizations and punishes Holocaust denial. In 2004 Romania's president apologized for his country's role in the Holocaust. Prime Minister Victor Ponta stated in June 2014 that the government of Romania accepts the responsibility of involvement in the Holocaust and issues surrounding Jewish property restitution.

In November 2010, a mass grave dating from 1941 was discovered near the village of Popricani, the site of a massacre of Jews carried out by Romanian troops allied with the Nazis. It is believed to contain the remains of up to a hundred Jewish men, women and children murdered by Romanian authorities contemporaneously with the nearby Iași pogrom. It is the first such grave found in Romania since the 1945 discovery of 311 bodies at Stâncă-Roznovanu, also in the vicinity of Iași. An official report concluded that the grave contained 36 victims, and that those responsible for the killing had already been sentenced in 1948.

An investigation by military prosecutors found in 2014 that the Popricani massacre was carried out by Romanian troops, despite Romania's denial that it participated in Holocaust atrocities. A second mass grave of Jews killed by Romanian troops during World War II was discovered in July of 2019.



In November 2015, four youths vandalized several tombstones at the Jewish cemetery in Sfântu Gheorghe (Transylvania). The police identified the suspects and started an investigation.

In May 2016, the Romanian government approved legislation that would give priority to restitution claims by Holocaust survivors for property lost during World War II and

under Communist rule. Romania became an International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) member country at the plenary session in December 2004 in Trieste, Italy. From May 23-26, 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) held its first bi-annual plenary meeting under the Romanian Chairmanship in Bucharest.

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On July 20, 2016, a memorial was dedicated in honor of the victims of a pogrom against the Jewish residents of Bucharest, Romania on January 21-23, 1941. The murder, torture, and other attacks against Jewish citizens already victims of persecution were perpetrated by Romania's Iron Guard during the Legionnaires Rebellion. The Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (FEDROM) erected the memorial with funds generated by The U.S. Commission for The Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and with the assistance of Bucharest's Third District.



*The memorial to the martyrs of the Bucharest Pogrom, dedicated by the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad*

In June 2018, Romania's parliament criminalized the dissemination of antisemitic ideas and symbols in public, crimes punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

In April 2019, the Jewish Cemetery in Huși, in eastern Romania's Vaslui county, was vandalized, and 73 tombstones were destroyed. The Husi cemetery attack occurred less than a year after vandals defaced the childhood home of Romanian Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel with antisemitic graffiti. The graffiti scrawled on his former home, now a museum, read: "Public toilet, antisemite pedophile" and "Nazi Jew lying in hell with Hitler."

In April 2019, The head of Romania's state-funded Bucharest Municipality Museum published an op-ed that critics said promotes antisemitic conspiracy theories.

Andrei Majuru, the director of the museum on history and art, suggested in his April 20 op-ed in the Adevarul newspaper that Romanian society is being ruined by descendants of the Khazars, an extinct Asian kingdom that according to one discredited theory had converted to Judaism.



In June 2019 Romania hosted the inaugural summit for antisemitism envoys, organized by the World Jewish Congress and the government of Romania. The meeting took place amid significant increases in the number of reported anti-Semitic incidents in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Austria, among other countries.

In September 2020, vandals shattered the marble panels of a Holocaust memorial to 7,500 Jews murdered in Târgu Mureș, located in the country's north.

In March 2021, the Romanian police arrested a man for sending death threats to the director of the Jewish State Theater in Bucharest and her children over the Passover holiday. The threats came in an email that was signed "on behalf of the far-right Alliance for Uniting Romanians (AUR)," police said.

In June 2021, The Center for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism in Romania-MCA reported an incident in the town of Ploesti, located about 50 miles north of Bucharest. Multiple headstones, some as recent as 2009, were knocked over. Several were smashed.

In June 2021, Stone-throwing teenagers smashed multiple windows of a 19th-century synagogue building in Romania. No one was hurt in the incident at the Synagogue of Orastie, in the western part of the country. Police labeled it an act of vandalism; a spokesperson was quoted as telling the *Stirile Transilvaniei* newspaper. The spokesperson did not say whether it was being treated as a hate crime.